

A graphic design featuring the word "KILLER" in large, bold, black letters. The letters are splattered with red paint, and a yellow diagonal banner across the bottom reads "CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE!".



A vertical collage featuring a yellow crime scene tape with the text "CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER!" repeated. The background includes a black and white checkered pattern, a red circle, and a black circle.



# THE KING OF COOL, THE SULTAN OF SIN, THE BARON OF BLOOD - QUENTIN TARANTINO RETURNS TO FORM WITH A CHOP-SOCKY MASTERPIECE.

WORDS SIMON BRAUND

OVER A BLANK SCREEN IS THE SOUND OF DESPERATE PANTING.

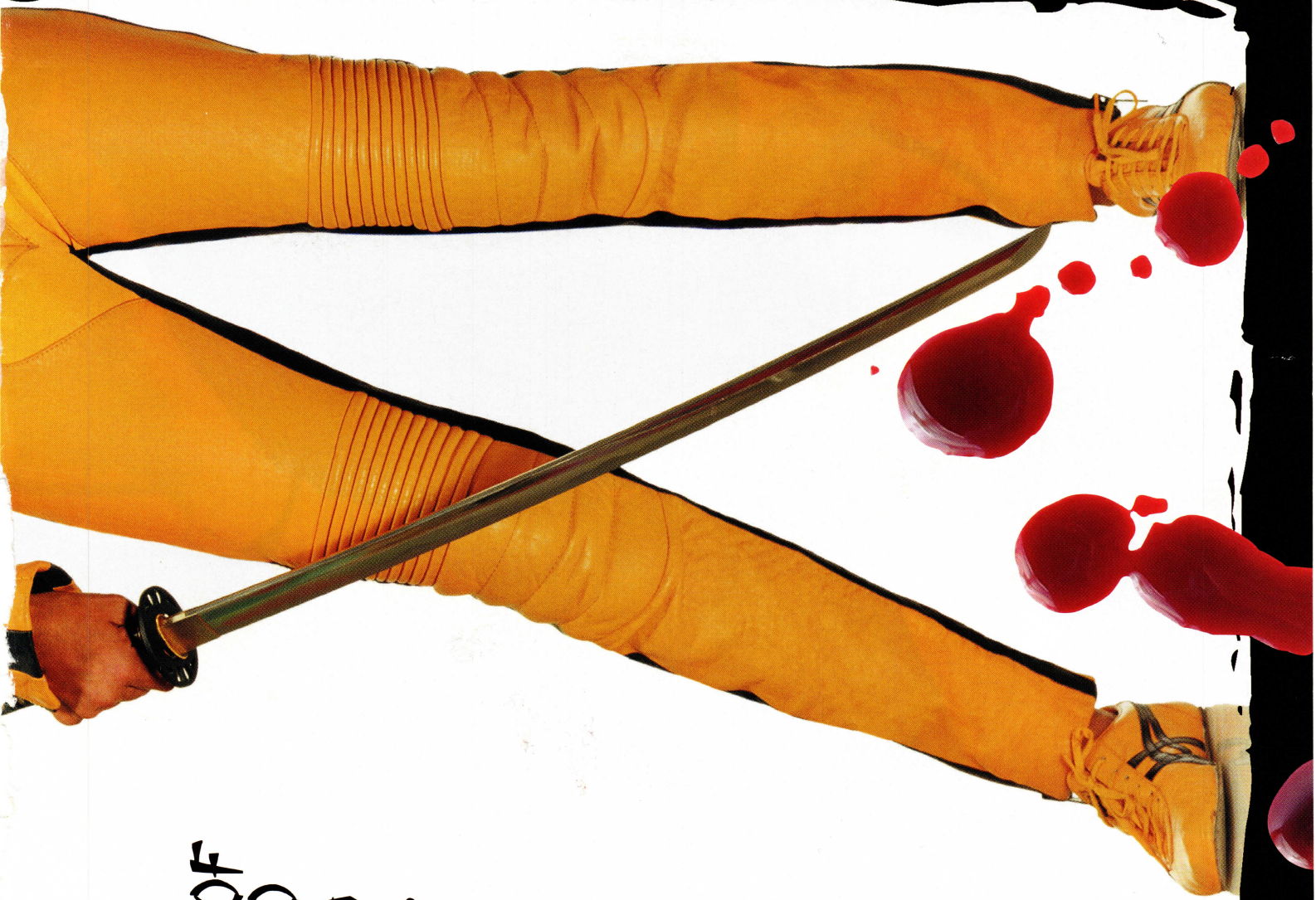
Fade in to a close-up of Uma Thurman's stricken face in silvery, high-contrast black & white. Splashes of blood on her cheeks and forehead glisten like dark mercury. She's wearing a bridal veil. A hand, holding a handkerchief, gently wipes the blood away. A voice, mellow and soothing but steeped with menace, speaks to her. "I bet I could fry an egg on your head right now, if I wanted to."

The hand dabs tenderly at the blood. Uma manages to croak, "Bill, it's your baby." Then Blam! A bullet in the head blacks out the screen. The credits roll as Nancy Sinatra sings, velvety soft, solemn as a prayer: "Bang bang, I hit the ground. Bang bang, that awful sound. Bang bang, my baby shot me down..."

Quentin Tarantino is back. And holy hell, Honeybunny, does he still know how to open a movie.

The *enfant terrible*/geek *auteur*/maverick genius/director-as-rock-star (delete as applicable) has been absent from the screen since 1997's Elmore Leonard adaptation *Jackie Brown*. *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, his latest affront to all that's decent, is his first offering as writer-director since the *Zeitgeist* rattling *Pulp Fiction* in 1994 and only his fourth film to date. A kaleidoscopic, ecstatically violent, pitch-black funny revenge fantasy, it's a chronologically shuffled and visually stunning gazetteer of the ex-video store clerk's formative influences. Described by

Tarantino himself as his "grindhouse epic", it ricochets through genres and sub-genres such as Shaw brothers kung-fu, Spaghetti Western, Hong Kong action, Yakuza gangster thriller, Japanese anime and theatrical samurai saga. And if it proves one thing, it's that seven years on the bench has not dulled the 40-year-old filmmaker's maniacal edge by one iota. The wiseass dialogue and pop culture references may have gone—he's canny enough to know that the wannabes co-opted them years ago—but *Kill Bill* will still trigger a collective orgasm in his fans, while propelling his critics to ever loftier peaks of apoplectic fury. And the first thing that both camps will be getting their respective rocks off to is, as usual, the violence. >>









Uma Thurman defying gravity as The Bride.



## "YOU DON'T SEE METALLICA AND ASK THEM TO TURN THE SOUND DOWN." **QUENTIN TARANTINO**

To call *Kill Bill* a violent film is at once stating the obvious and missing the point. Yes, it features more blood spilt, splashed, spurted and spewed into the air as if from some hellish garden hose than any other film in mainstream history, but the violence is not simply an element of *Kill Bill*. Nor is it, as Lucy Liu, who plays Yakuza queen O-Ren Ishi, contends, a character in its own right, compelling though that interpretation is. It is nothing less than its milieu. And as such, it's Tarantino's customary stance that you can take it or leave it.

"It's cinematic entertainment, that's it," he states, bluntly. "I don't feel the need to justify it. To me, that's like asking Vincente Minnelli to come up here and justify the musical sequences in *Meet Me In St. Louis*. It's just one of the most cinematic, most fun things you can do. It's almost as if Edison invented the movie camera to do action and violence."

Taken as a whole, what is also guaranteed to upset more conservative pundits is the characteristic jocularity of the blood-letting and Tarantino's habit of abruptly switching the emotional tone from dark comedy one moment to sickening brutality the next. A good example is Thurman biting the tongue of an attempted rapist, stretching it out like a piece of bubblegum, then graphically slamming his accomplice's head in a metal door. "I love that," he barks, delightedly, now clearly on a roll. "I love fucking with your emotions. To me, that's an audience

having a fucking good time. That's not just images washing over you. Audiences in the '50s wanted, for the price of a ticket, to feel every emotion under the sun. And that's not a bad manifesto for a director. The tabloid newspapers won't get it, but that's because they're fucking fuddy-duddies. I ain't really got anything to say to them. With this movie I was striving for more of a rock concert experience. And what, Metallica actually give a fuck what people who don't like their music think of them? You know, you don't go to a Metallica concert and ask the fuckers to turn the volume down."

Another thing not dulled by his seven-year hiatus, you'll notice, is Quentin Tarantino's appetite for a fight. "The audience for this movie is 14 to 45," he says. "I'm not saying people beyond that can't go, but if they don't like it, then fuck 'em. I ain't making it for them."

*Kill Bill* is the story of The Bride (Thurman). Once a key member of the elite ViPER assassination squad, presided over by the enigmatic Bill (David Carradine), her attempt to break free and start a new life comes to a crashing halt when her former colleagues (Lucy Liu, Daryl Hannah, Vivica A. Fox and Michael Madsen) show up at her wedding and slaughter everyone in sight. They leave The Bride and her unborn child for dead, not realising that they have only put her in a coma. When she comes to four years >>

ENTER! CRIM

IE SCENE! DO



To-ga! To-ga!





Tarantino still broke out the *Reservoir Dogs* gear once in a while.

## "I SAID TO QUENTIN, 'SPEAKING AS ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST FANS, WE REALLY NEED TO MAKE A MOVIE.'" LAWRENCE BENDER

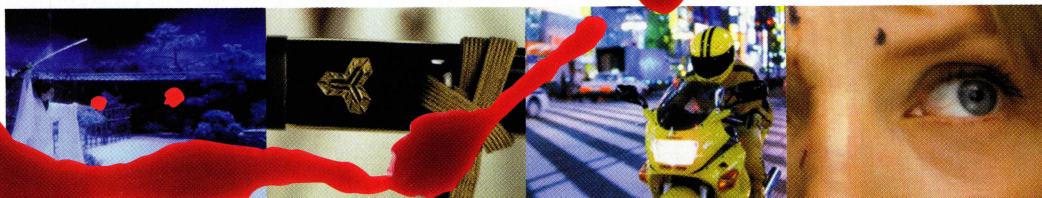
later, with her baby dead and nothing left to live for, she embarks on a quest to track down each member of the ViPER squad and to make them pay, and pay big. As each one falls, she comes ever closer to her ultimate goal – to kill Bill.

The film had its genesis while Tarantino was shooting *Pulp Fiction* in 1993. "We finished shooting one day," he recalls, "and the whole cast and crew were going out to a bar in Santa Monica. I went home to change and while I was changing I was like, Hey, what about a revenge movie with Uma where she's an assassin and a bunch of people fuck her up." As they say, from little acorns. "I went to the bar and I said, 'Uma, I've got this really great idea for a movie. You're this badass assassin and in the beginning a bunch of banditos, like in a Spaghetti Western, beat you up and shoot you in the head.' She said, 'That sounds really, really cool.' We talked about it for the rest of the shoot. About a week after I had the idea, she came up to me and said, 'Quentin, I was thinking of something. What if the first time you see me, when I'm beat up and bloody, I'm in a bridal gown?' And that was it, *The Bride* was born."

Having written eight pages or so of the script, Tarantino all but forgot about the project until he ran into Thurman at a party three years ago. "Quentin had

been writing *Inglorious Bastards* [a sprawling take on *The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly* set in Nazi-occupied France, according to Tarantino] for a year, year-and-a-half," says Tarantino's producer Lawrence Bender. "Then he ran into Uma at the Golden Globes and she reminded him about *Kill Bill*. He ran up to me and said, 'Listen, I really wanna do this.' With *Inglorious Bastards* ballooning out of control, Bender was all for it. But what was supposed to be a low-budget filler to give Tarantino a breather from *Bastards* quickly mutated into an epic in its own right. "The more involved he got with it, the bigger it became," says Bender. "At one point I said to him, 'Quentin, speaking as one of your biggest fans, we really do need to make a fucking movie.' We were finally ready to start and then Uma got pregnant." This potential setback was actually a blessing in disguise, giving Tarantino and Bender more time to prepare.

With pre-production finally complete and the cast well trained in their various methods of mayhem, the film, Tarantino's most ambitious undertaking to date, was shot with a multinational crew representing some 18 different countries in mainland China and Japan. "I chose to work on a bigger canvas," he says, "and it became my responsibility to fill it. It sure made me appreciate the smaller canvas sometimes." »



CRIME SCENE!  
E! DO IT



**CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER!**

## Uma Thurman as The Bride

UMA THURMAN ONCE DESCRIBED HERSELF AS A "TALL, SANDY blonde, with sort of blue eyes, skinny in places, fat in others. An average gal." Tall we'll give her - she stands six feet in her socks. As for the rest... When she walks into the room at New York's Regency Hotel, her golden hair is pulled back in a ponytail, her figure is a breathtaking combination of slender and voluptuous, and her eyes are the liquid aquamarine of a California swimming pool. There is nothing average about Uma Karuna Thurman. And after her performance as The Bride in *Kill Bill*, not even her powers of self-deprecation can pretend there is.

"Quentin wrote me a part that was impossible to do," says Thurman. "He asked me to do things that were impossible. But I put one foot in front of the other, and we got through it."

Three months after giving birth to her second child, in preparation for the role on which the extravaganza rests, Thurman was plunged into a training regimen that would make a triathlete weep. Her typical day consisted of eight hours of wire work, a couple of hours of samurai and Chinese swordsmanship, two kinds of kung-fu, instruction in the finer points of knife fighting and an intensive course in Japanese.

"Then they'd bring in another trainer to make me lift weights," she laughs. "I remember the first day I did a camera test in the tracksuit. They had to take it in because I had lost so much weight. I put on the suit and walked down to do my test, and I had tears running down my face. It had been so hard to get there."

In a sense, Thurman has only herself to blame. She persuaded Tarantino to nurture the germ of an idea into a fully fledged movie.

"He'd written about eight pages," remembers Thurman, "and we got to talking about the type of character I wanted to play and the type of movie he wanted to make. He was like, 'There'll be this guy and he runs an assassination agency and his name is Bill. It's going to be called *Kill Bill!*' Then it kind of went away. And then about three and a half years ago I ran into him and asked him what happened to those pages, did he lose them? He hadn't."

And so QT set to work. "He was going to present me with a finished script on my birthday," says Thurman, "but it wasn't ready." Not such a bad thing. When asked what struck her as the most daunting aspect of the screenplay when she first read it, Thurman is unequivocal. "It was all very scary," she says.

"Quentin wrote me this part and he made it as tough as possible," she says. "But now when I watch the movie, when I see this giant action sequence that took eight weeks to shoot, and I see it all put together and I see myself get through it, that's pretty amazing. It changed me to do it." Would she work with Tarantino again? "Oh don't start," she half-laughs, half-groans.

"Who knows? I love him, he's brilliant. But he's a madman."

SIMON BRAUND

A person is holding a camera, and the image is overlaid with a diagonal yellow banner that reads "CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE!" in bold black capital letters. The banner is repeated three times across the image. The background is a blurred photograph of a person's legs in jeans and a camera.



CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER!

# BLONDE FIST

## Daryl Hannah as Elle Driver

ANYONE WHO HAS FOND MEMORIES OF DARYL HANNAH FROM HER *Blade Runner*, *Splash* and *Roxanne* heyday will have reason to hope that Quentin Tarantino's Lazarus touch works its customary magic on the willowy blonde's career. Not that she needs a great deal of help right now, thanks to a stand-out performance as a hermaphrodite angel in the Polish brothers' *Northfork* and no less than two John Sayles films to her credit (*Casa De Los Babys* and the forthcoming *Silver City*). Still, playing a psychopathic, one-eyed murder machine in *Kill Bill* is not going to do her any harm on the versatility front.

"It's certainly the only character I've ever played who has no innocence or vulnerability whatsoever," says Hannah of Elle Driver, Uma Thurman's arch-nemesis in the blood-soaked revenge epic. "In fact, she's probably the meanest, nastiest character ever. You only get introduced to her in *Volume 1*. You have no idea how bad she really is. And she's baaad - a really bitter angry bitch."

Not, then, the Daryl Hannah we know and love. Which was clearly uppermost in Tarantino's mind when he offered her the part during Hannah's starring run in the London production of *The Seven Year Itch* a few years back.

"I'd met him briefly for *Pulp Fiction*," she says, "and all of a sudden he turns up in my dressing-room. My first response was, 'Oh my God. What the hell are you doing here!? I mean, nice to see you again.' He told me he had a character in mind for me called Elle Driver. So for months until he sent me the script I was like, 'All-right, I'm El Driver. I'm a Mexican chauffeur. Cool!'"

The script put her straight on that one. But she still needed a little more background. "I asked Quentin for a few reference points," she laughs, "and I received boxes and boxes and boxes of videotapes. One of them was a Swedish porno movie called *They Call Her One-Eye*. That's where he got the idea for the eye-patch. He decided I used to be someone with Interpol who was searching for Bill to assassinate him but who falls for him instead and he turns her. It's great, he does all your homework for you."

Of course, Hannah also had to do plenty of graft herself, particularly in the months of gruelling fight training. "I love that stuff," she gushes. "I'm already athletically inclined so I had a bit of an advantage, but I also really enjoy it. Sometimes at the end of the day I'd say to Master Wo-Ping 'Can I please get on the wires again?' He'd say, 'No. You have no more wire work today.' 'But Quentin might ask me to do a double backflip half gaynor twist tomorrow.' He'd go, 'Okay. One more time.'"

Her dedication paid off. Hannah promises that her showdown with Thurman, which we won't see until *Volume 2*, will be "the most disgusting, dirty, brutal cat-fight ever. Quentin had seen *Jackass* before he shot it so it just got exponentially grosser and more hardcore. I get thrown through a wall and my head pushed down the toilet."

One more arduous task Hannah agreed to do on behalf of the movie was to appear in *Playboy* the month of its release. "Miramax begged me and begged me and begged me," she sighs. "Harvey [Weinstein] was like, [imitates the Miramax honcho's gruff delivery] 'We're having the opening party at the mansion and blah, blah, blah.' I said, 'Why me? Why don't you call Uma?' He said, 'Uma's doing *Vogue*.' I was like, 'Oh, great. Uma's doing *Vogue* and I'm doing *Playboy*.' I agreed to do it because they paid me tons of money and you really don't have to show anything anymore. We didn't even shoot my butt," she laughs. "I think Miramax leaked it to the press, because I hadn't told my mom and she faxed me an article about it. She just wrote on it, 'Comment?'"

SIMON BRAUND





ENTER! CRIME



The finished script for *Kill Bill* was 220 pages long, over three-and-a-half hours of screen time. It was decided during post-production, with the full blessing of Miramax heavyweight Harvey Weinstein, to cut it in half and release it as two separate films. *Volume 2* has a tentative American release date of 20 February 2004. "That all stemmed from Harvey not wanting me to cut anything," says Tarantino. "It takes Herculean confidence in a movie to cut it in half. It was basically a question of intensity. After you've finished with *Volume 1*, I don't think you can cope with *Volume 2* right away. You have to experience them in digestible chunks. *Volume 1* is a straight-line burst of adrenaline; in *Volume 2* we slow it down a little and it starts to look like my other movies. The dialogue comes to the fore and it's more chronologically fucked up."

To put the scale of the movie into perspective, it took ten weeks to shoot the whole of *Reservoir Dogs*, Tarantino's 1992 feature debut, whereas it took eight weeks to shoot a single fight sequence for *Kill Bill*. It's no surprise then that the budget mushroomed from \$US42 million to \$US55 million and that the production went over schedule by 155 days. "It's a big chunk," admits Bender, "but considering what we achieved I think it's pretty good. And Harvey never phoned once to ask what the fuck was going on. I swear, not once. In fact, at the start we were doing

14-hour days, six days a week and he phoned and said, 'Go to five-day weeks. You guys are killing yourselves and Uma's going to get hurt.'"

It's no surprise either that the scene in question is, perhaps, the most astonishing fight sequence ever committed to film, with The Bride in her trademark yellow tracksuit – a homage to Bruce Lee in *Game Of Death* – brandishing the mythical sword of Hattori Hanso (martial arts legend Sonny Chiba) and confronting the Yakuza hordes of O-Ren Ishi across the Zen garden dance floor of a Tokyo nightclub. Balletic and incandescently gory carnage ensues.

"About three-and-a-half weeks into filming that sequence," says Tarantino, explaining why it took so long, "[cinematographer] Bob Richardson comes up to me and says, 'It's no wonder this Hong Kong stuff looks as good as it does. It's really fucking difficult.' You just can't do Hong Kong action in a Hollywood style. You have to break everything down into little bits – these two moves, these three moves. Then you have to get every angle you need from every possible side before you move on. It's incredibly painstaking."

This scene, a heightened-reality orgy of stylised, expressionistic violence, mordant humour and iconic set pieces, encapsulates what *Kill Bill* is all about. It's the epitome of what Lawrence Bender calls "Tarantinoland". "Like the soul of the samurai" »

**"MY GUYS ARE ALL REAL. I'M SICK TO DEATH OF CGI. IT REALLY IS KILLING THE ART FORM."** QUENTIN TARANTINO



Quentin went through the fantasy one more time.



Lucy's samurai skills were snow joke.



# "THIS IS MY YAKUZA MOVIE, THIS IS MY SAMURAI MOVIE, THIS IS MY SPAGHETTI WESTERN." QUENTIN TARANTINO

filtered through Quentin's eyes," he says. The Yakuza, 70 of them or more, are dressed in black suits, white shirts and black ties. They look eerily familiar on two counts. The first, of course, is their resemblance to the cast of *Reservoir Dogs*. The second is their likeness to the swarm of Agent Smiths ganging up on Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix Reloaded*. All similarities are, one suspects, entirely uncoincidental.

"First off," says Tarantino, gearing up, "I've always thought of black suits as mine, so there. I was there way before *The Matrix*, way before *Men In Black*, everything. The poster for *Men In Black* looks like the fucking Bande Apart [Tarantino's production company] logo. So I don't think of them as Men In Black or Agent Smiths, I think of them as Reservoir Dogs with slightly less cool sunglasses. But, you know, that fight sequence never even occurred to me until I had a directors' screening and Luc Besson turned up with Keanu Reeves as his date. I watched him watching it and I suddenly felt it – my guys are all fucking real! There's no computer fucking around. That's really Uma, that's not fucking CGI. I'm sick to death of all that shit. In *Kill Bill*, I've got a handful of CGI shots – if I cut off a finger. I used it to remove wires. My feeling was that if we couldn't do something on the day then we couldn't do it. Period. This is old

school. If I'd wanted all that computer game bullshit, I'd have gone home and stuck my dick in a Nintendo. CGI is the death knell of cinema, it really is killing the fucking art form."

Although Bill himself is glimpsed only briefly in *Volume 1* – we hear his voice and see his hand caressing the hilt of a samurai sword – his shadowy presence dominates the film. Finding the right actor for the role was a crucial casting decision. Tarantino could not have chosen better than David Carradine, who played the title role in TV series *Kung Fu*, but the part was originally earmarked for Warren Beatty.

"I've always wanted to work with Warren," says Tarantino. "We've become friendly and he's always wanted to work with me. Before I got to know Bill a hundred per cent, I thought he could be great in the part, so when I first started writing I was patterning it for him. Then at some point, Bill became his own person. I began discovering him, finding out who he really was. Warren was still a good choice, and he'd have been wonderful, but a combination of things happened. First of all, I read David Carradine's autobiography, *Endless Highway*, which is literally one of the best autobiographies ever written, a three-way combination of Kerouac, Dickens and Carradine himself. I began to think he could play this part. And I »



TIME SCENE! D



**SIMON BRAUND**



# DOWN BY LAW

## Julie Dreyfus as Sofie Fatale

ALTHOUGH JULIE DREYFUS HAS A SIMILAR NAME TO A CERTAIN American sitcom actress, *Seinfeld* alumna Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and is often mistaken for her on that basis alone, she could hardly be more different from self-centred Manhattanite Elaine Benes, her near-namesake's signature character.

Born and raised in Paris, Dreyfus has lived most of the past 10 years in Japan. Originally there to study Japanese, she drifted into acting while working for a French educational TV channel. Several years ago she met Quentin Tarantino at a Tokyo Film Festival. It turned out, much to her surprise, that he was fan. "I'd worked exclusively in Japan," she says in impeccable English (she also studied for a year at a language school in Oxford). "But he'd seen everything, the good stuff and the bad stuff. I suppose he saw some potential. He's got that great brain of his where he files people away and remembers them for the future. Then when he started writing *Kill Bill* he called me up and told me he was writing a part for me. I was going, 'My God, my God.'"

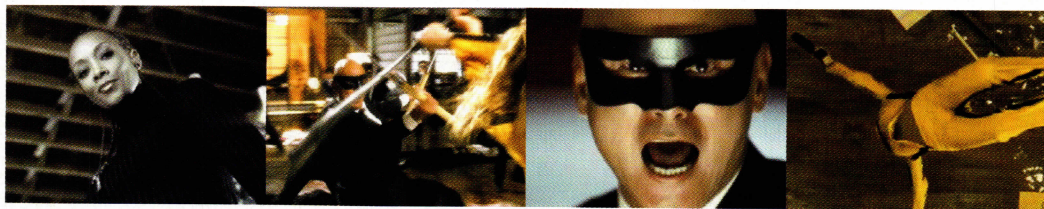
As well she might. The part Tarantino had earmarked for her was Sofie Fatale, ice maiden attorney to Yakuza boss O-Ren Ishi (Lucy Liu) and ruthless factotum to the ViPER assassination squad. It's a plum role, perfectly suited to Dreyfus's sloe-eyed beauty and clipped British accent. But it did come with one singular disappointment. "I don't get to do anything cool," she wails. "I was really upset that I didn't get a fight scene. I probably said something to Quentin, but the way he wrote it was right. Even so I did all the training with the other girls. And I was so jealous," she laughs. "I was like, 'Okay, I can kick arse too now. Why won't you let me?'"

Even without a punch-up of her own, most people will find Dreyfus plenty cool enough. And there's no doubt that when *Kill Bill* hits screens in the US this spring, the doors of Hollywood will open wide. "I hope so," she says. "I hope it'll inspire another genius to write a part for me."

SIMON BRAUND

CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER!  
CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER! CRIME SCENE! DO NOT ENTER!





think when I talked to Warren I had the idea Bill wouldn't come into it until the end, like Brando in *Apocalypse Now*. But that turned out not to be the case, Bill wouldn't stay put, he's there throughout the movie, especially in *Volume 2*. It just became a bigger deal than I'd led Warren to believe, the time commitment and the martial arts training."

What was never in any doubt was that Uma Thurman would play The Bride. And that held true even when her pregnancy threatened to throw a serious spanner in the works. "When Uma got pregnant," says Tarantino, "I had to make a decision: do I wait for her or do I not? I can honestly tell you I don't know any other director who would have waited. But I didn't have a choice. I had absolutely no choice. They way I looked at it was, yes, this is my Yakuza movie, yes, this is my samurai movie, yes, this is my badass chick movie, my Spaghetti Western, my comic-book movie. It's all of that stuff, but it's also my Josef von Sternberg movie. You know, if you're Josef von Sternberg getting ready to make *Morocco* and Dietrich gets pregnant, you wait for Dietrich. And history will thank you for it."

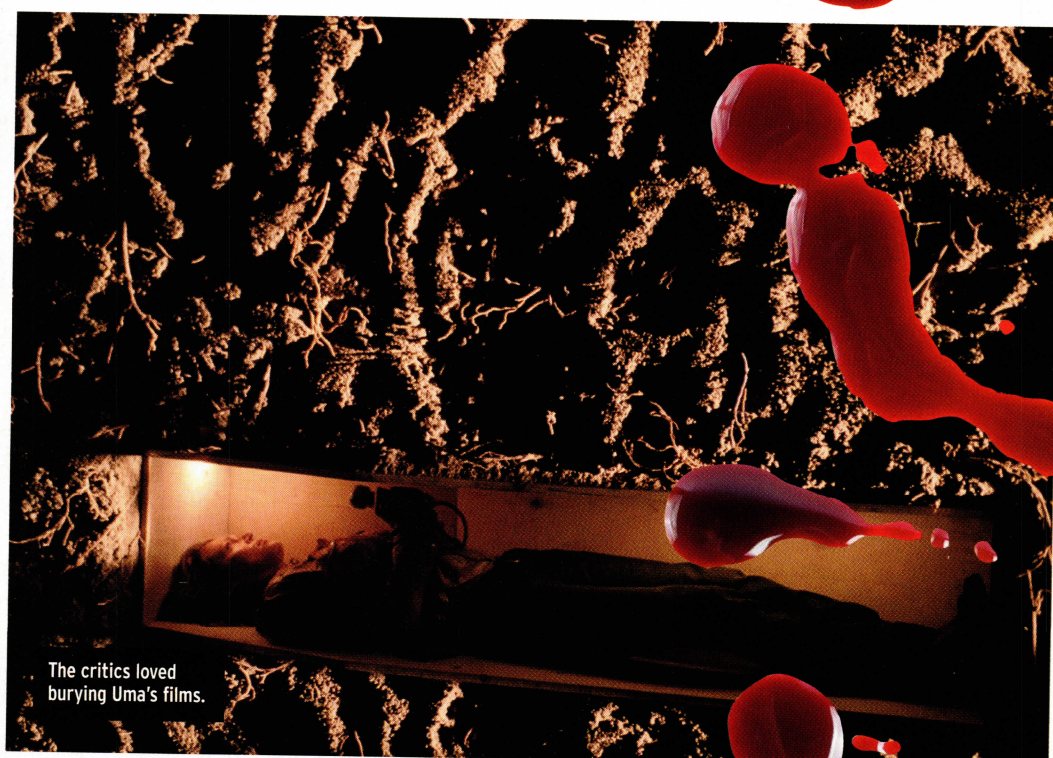
The judgment of history appears to have a significant influence on Tarantino's creative drive.

He attacks each project with furious intensity, determined that each will have the same visceral impact as the last. For him, making movies is a religion, not a job. And in his own inimitable, energetically profane way he makes it clear exactly why it can take seven years to settle on a project, why he will wait 12 months for his leading lady to give birth and why he will spend as long as it takes to shoot a single fight scene. "It has to be everything to me," he says, "like I'd fucking die for it. And I want that to be the case right down my filmography, because there's some kid, some really cool kid who's not even born yet whose gonna discover my movies the way I discovered Howard Hawks. I'm an old man, I'm retired, I'm giving retrospectives," he laughs, "and he's gonna say, 'Well, I liked that one, let's see what the others are like.' And I don't want to disappoint him. I want the last movie I make to have the same hard dick that *Reservoir Dogs* had. Even if he doesn't like it I want him to know that I meant it, that I didn't make movies to pay for my pool. I want to be able to stand by all of them."

» *Kill Bill* is released on October 16 and is reviewed on page 36.

**"I WANT THE LAST MOVIE I MAKE TO HAVE THE SAME HARD DICK AS RESERVOIR DOGS."**

QUENTIN TARANTINO



The critics loved burying Uma's films.

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asics



TAI CHI AS SEEN IN QUENTIN TARANTINO'S KILL BILL VOLUME 1 - IN CINEMAS OCTOBER 16

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